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Developmental Disabilities: Asian, Pacific Islander Leaders Converge to Address Barriers to Service Access for Orange County Families

Cypress, CA (October 2019) – Approximately 60 leaders from community, business and religious organizations, as well as government agencies, universities, and local legislators’ offices participated in [Regional Center of Orange County](#)’s first Asian Pacific Islander Leadership Forum on Oct. 24, exploring barriers, solutions and partnerships to better meet the needs of those with developmental disabilities and mental health challenges in Orange County.

“We are committed to reaching underserved individuals in the Asian Pacific Islander community, who could benefit from the Regional Center services,” said RCOC Executive Director [Larry Landauer](#). “We’re grateful to the many leaders who joined us to discuss outreach strategies for connecting people to services, breaking down cultural barriers to accessing services, and building collaborations to ensure needs are met.”

The nearly full-day forum, hosted at [RCOC’s Cypress office](#), featured workgroups that revealed several barriers to accessing needed services, and issues to consider in connection with community outreach, including:

- **Lingering cultural stigma related to disabilities and to seeking public assistance,** generally;
- **Understanding family dynamics,** such as respect for elders and the importance of role models and community leaders in educational efforts;
- **Encouraging families to ask questions about services,** and educating them about how to be effective advocates for loved ones with disabilities;
- **Identifying when and how families prefer to receive information,** in terms of both language and channel (e.g., in person, at community events, in print or digital form).

A panel discussion to inspire collaboration and community outreach was moderated by attorney [Derrick Nguyen](#), past President of the [Vietnamese American Bar Association of Southern California](#), and featured:

- [Ellen Ahn](#), JD, MSW, Executive Director, [Korean Community Services](#)
- [Deepa Bharath](#), [Southern California News Group](#) Reporter
- Clayton Chau, MD, PhD, Chief Clinical and Strategy Officer, Mind OC
- [Liza Krassner](#), Regional Center of Orange County Board Member and Community Supporter
- [Susan Wan-Ross](#), IOM, CEO, [Yorba Linda Chamber of Commerce](#)

About Regional Center of Orange County

[Regional Center of Orange County](#) is one of 21 private, nonprofit organizations contracted by the [State of California](#) to coordinate lifelong services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. The Regional Center is the first stop for those seeking to obtain local services and supports to help them live safely and with dignity in the community. RCOC serves more than 22,000 Orange County residents with developmental disabilities and their families. Developmental disabilities include autism, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, and intellectual disabilities.

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